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**[A]**

Column 2, Line 17 to Line 38

[0002]

[Prior Art] Representative examples of coding method for image signals include ISO/IEC MPEG-1 and -2 and ITU-T H. 261, H. 262 and H. 263. These coding methods are known to provide high coding efficiency and excellent image quality. In conventional image coding, an image signal is divided into two-dimensional or three-dimensional blocks so as to be coded on a block-by-block basis. In ISO/IEC MPEG 4 currently serving as new international standard, besides the color signals such as YUV and RGB, a binary signal indicating a figure and a permeability signal expressing the proportions of a plurality of synthesized images in pixels are also counted as one of the image signals. These image signals are also coded on a block-by-block basis.

[0003] Meanwhile, to code an image, it is necessary to restrict the amount of data of the coding signals under a prescribed value because of the limit of the capacity of transmission channel and recording medium. This processing is referred to as rate control. The rate control includes a method of reducing the number of bits by roughening quantization step to tolerate the distortion of the pixel value in the amplitude direction, and a method of reducing the number of bits by reducing the pixels to be coded by sub-sample to tolerate the distortion of the spatial resolution. The former is applied only to a multi-value signal which can be quantized while the latter can be used for both the binary signal and the multi-value signal as a beneficial point.